

Citizens Project's Statement to the Media

April 22, 2002

"Develop the City government as a high performance organization through enhanced learning capabilities, diversity and inclusiveness in the workforce, and empowerment of employees."

From "Direction 2000" City of Colorado Springs Strategic Plan

"The bottom line is this community awards people for hard work and proving themselves in their field. It doesn't matter if you're white, African-American or Hispanic."

Lionel Rivera, The Gazette, April 14, 2003

Citizens Project applauds the citizen-driven strategic plan and Mayor Rivera for leadership that eschews discrimination and values inclusiveness, diversity, and character.

Leading national and local employers share similar values of diversity and inclusion by providing domestic partner benefits to attract, retain, and reward talented, hard-working employees. These businesses have arrived at the conclusion that domestic partner benefits are about good business. As a major employer, the City of Colorado Springs reiterated this "good business" approach when approving the benefits last year that include city employees – including employees of Memorial Hospital and Colorado Springs Utilities.

Therefore, Citizens Project finds the proposed resolution to end these benefits in 2004 out of step with the values articulated by the strategic plan and Mayor Rivera's statements. Make no mistake; this attempt to remove the city's domestic partner benefits from future budgets is not about financial constraints. Rather, it is about exclusion and discrimination of hard-working city employees based on their sexuality.

Citizens Project knows that many persons in this city view non-heterosexual domestic partner relationships with outrage and scorn. Promoting fairness has historically provoked outrage and met resistance throughout American history. We invite our city leaders to join the noble traditions of this country that seek to dispel discrimination and instill equal opportunity for all, despite detractors.

Passing this resolution as the first item of business for the new administration has no immediate fiscal consequence, but does hinder our community's progress to remove the negative labels used by the national media post-Amendment 2. This resolution merely serves as a symbolic act that reinforces attitudes of prejudice and exclusion. We encourage city council to postpone this resolution for 90 days to allow for more public discussion on the economic and financial impacts that domestic partner benefits create both in the city budget and in the broader community.

For more information:

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Citizens Project spotlights issues and mobilizes people in the Pikes Peak region to protect, promote, and strengthen the traditional American values of equal rights; individual freedoms; respect for ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity; and civic involvement.

Domestic Partner Benefits: It's about good business, it's about fairness!

Sure, Colorado state statute doesn't recognize "same-sex spouses" but same-sex domestic partner benefits are not about marriage. Domestic partner benefits are about extending health coverage, creating attractive and diverse workplaces, rewarding commitment, valuing hard work, retaining talent, and investing in people. This is not a radical agenda, but rather a standard practice in the business world.

Did you know?

The Human Rights Campaign reports 189 Fortune 500 companies offer domestic partner health benefits. Many of them have employees, offices, stores, or factories in Colorado Springs, including:

- Hewlett-Packard
- Verizon Communications
- Boeing
- Target
- Sears, Roebuck, and Co.
- Wells Fargo
- Merrill Lynch
- Lockheed Martin
- Intel
- Best Buy
- American Airlines
- Qwest
- United Airlines
- Delta Airlines
- Marriott
- Oracle
- Northwest Airlines
- Progressive
- Continental Airlines
- Agilent
- Barnes and Noble
- Coors Brewing
- Borders
- US Bancorp
- Starbucks
- H&R Block

155 local governments and quasi-governmental agencies offer domestic partner benefits. In Colorado, this list includes:

- City of Colorado Springs
- City of Boulder
- City of Denver
- City of Glendale
- Summit County

11 state governments offer their employees domestic partner benefits:

- State of California
- State of Connecticut
- State of Iowa
- State of Maine
- State of Minnesota
- State of New Mexico
- State of New York
- State of Oregon
- State of Rhode Island
- State of Vermont
- State of Washington